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ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION TOWARD LEARNING A SECOND  
LANGUAGE IN AN INTERNET-BASED INFORMAL CONTEXT:  
PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY ESL STUDENTS

by  
Yi Zhou

A Thesis  
Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research  
through Education  
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for  
the Degree of Master of Education at the  
University of Windsor

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## ABSTRACT

Motivation has been identified as a determining factor that influences L2 achievement. The Internet serves as an increasingly important language-learning tool yet its impact on L2 motivation has not been researched enough, particularly in informal contexts. This study investigates the motivational factors for English-as-a-Second language (ESL) learners focusing on an Internet-based informal context. The results indicate that students are moderately motivated to learn ESL in this informal context. They have positive attitudes toward the use of the Internet, which is recognized as an attitudinal foundation to support their motivation. These attitudes are significantly correlated with computer & Internet self-efficacy. One of the most significant reasons why students choose to be involved in the Internet-based situation is that it alleviates their communication apprehension. The findings provide information about the characteristics of the Internet that would facilitate L2 educators' endeavor to integrate the Internet into their instruction and pedagogical practice.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Learning a second or foreign language, both referred to as L2, is an arduous and time-consuming process. L2 learning occurs both inside and outside the classroom, often referred to as formal and informal learning context. Any setting that provides opportunities to use and experience the language is called an informal context (Gardner, 2001, 2006). L2 learning is a life-long process largely involved in informal contexts. Informal contexts serve as an important source of L2 input and provide opportunities for learners to internalize the rules of the language learned in previous formal settings (Krashen, 1981, 2004).

L2 motivation, referred to as effort expended, desire to learn, and favorable attitudes toward learning the language, accounts for a large and meaningful proportion of the difference in language learning achievement (Gardner, 2001, 2006). Other factors that influence L2 learning, such as language aptitude and learning strategies are dependent on motivation to the extent to which their effects could be realized. L2 learners need to be motivated in order to have a persistent attempt to develop their language proficiency by learning and practicing more, doing more self-directed and regulated work, and looking for opportunities to learn more. This is more important in informal than formal contexts (Gardner, 2001).

Motivation plays an important role and has a major and long lasting direct effect in informal contexts in which L2 learning is usually not required. It is, therefore, largely

dependent on motivation (a) whether or not an individual would like to be involved in the informal learning experience, (b) how much time and effort the individual would like to spend on L2 learning activities, and (c) how consistent the effort could be (Gardner, 2001). This is particularly true when it comes to L2 learners who are no longer taking language class and receiving no language instruction.

It is of interest to researchers to investigate L2 motivation and identify factors that influence it. According to Gardner (1985, 2001, 2006), motivation comes from and is sustained by some necessary attitudinal foundations, with the two primary ones being identified as integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. Integrativeness, which reflects an interest in the target language group and an openness to take on characteristics of the target culture and community, has been found to be relatively stable, but attitudes toward the learning situation are dynamic and may differ in various contexts (Gardner, 2001). L2 educators and practitioners need to be acknowledged of learners' motivation in different settings and understand its particular attitudinal supports.

With the development of computer-related technology, the Internet (including World Wide Web and online communications) is serving as one of the most popular and necessary educational medium in classroom. It is also becoming more and more important as a primary information source and a communication tool. This is particularly true for university L2 learners who are heavily exposed to the Internet for both class work and leisure purposes. In informal contexts, when their Internet experiences involve the target language, they may acquire new knowledge and skills of the language and practice

what they have learned. Language learning takes place when the target language is used in online activities, such as communicating with others, surfing the web, or obtaining and reading information. This learning situation is identified by the researcher as an Internet-based informal context.

Motivated by a need to understand L2 motivation in informal contexts, particularly the Internet-based context, I will survey some Chinese English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) students who are currently enrolled in a Southern Ontario university. I seek to explore their attitudes and motivation toward English learning, investigate the Internet-based learning situation and examine how it would influence their language learning motivation.

#### Coming to the Research: Personal Standpoint

My interest in researching L2 motivation comes from my experience both as an L2 teacher and learner. I have been learning English for almost 17 years since I first started in my junior high school. I witnessed how some of my friends who were very talented language learners did not turn out to be the most proficient. During my teaching career back in China, I had noticed that not all my proficient students showed an aptitude for language learning, but they were always the most motivated ones in my class. These experiences helped me realize and understand the important role motivation plays in L2 learning and made me want to research into it in order to help the less motivated ones in class.

When I came to Canada three years ago, my interest and focus on L2 motivation

switched from classroom setting to informal learning context, as most ESL students here are no longer taking language class, especially after university entry. Like in classrooms, ESL students in informal situations demonstrate various levels of motivation – some end the learning together with their English class and do not bother to take it one step further; at the other extreme, some are still trying their best to seek opportunities to learn and practice English. I was intrigued and wanted to investigate what makes the difference in their levels of motivation and what helps sustain motivation to further their language learning beyond formal learning in schools.

My informal conversations with some motivated ESL students helped me understand various learning situations, with the Internet-based context being recognized as very important. A question then naturally came to my mind: how did this particularly learning situation contribute to their ESL motivation? Keeping all the questions in mind, I started this research study with the following research questions.

### Research Questions

The present study seeks to add to the current literature the understanding of L2 motivation. Taking university Chinese ESL students as an example, this survey study will identify the general L2 motivation in informal contexts; examine how students' attitudes toward an Internet-based informal context (AIIC) influence L2 motivation; and explore the characteristics that may have an impact on these attitudes. The data collected will be analyzed to answer the following research questions:

1: What are university Chinese students' ESL motivation and orientations in informal

contexts?

2: How does an Internet-based informal learning context help support ESL motivation?

3: What are the specific characteristics of the Internet that have an impact on students' attitudes toward learning English using the Internet?

4: What are the factors that influence university Chinese students' attitudes and motivation to learn ESL in informal contexts?

### Significance of the Study

The significance of this study is three-fold: First, the findings of this study will add to the current research the knowledge of L2 motivation in informal contexts and the understanding of attitudinal foundations that sustain motivation. Second, L2 educators and instructors will benefit from gaining a better understanding of the characteristics inherent in an Internet-based context that help support language learning motivation. This knowledge will direct teachers and curriculum designers to incorporate these factors into their classroom activities, instructions as well as the teaching syllabus in order to promote students learning performance. Third, L2 learners in both formal and informal contexts will benefit from the findings of this study as well, especially the less motivated learners. It is important for them to understand the factors that motivate others and it would in turn help promote their own learning motivation.

## Orientation to this Thesis

In the following chapters, I start with a critical review of the literature, discussing the role the Internet plays in L2 learning, examining the key issues of L2 motivation research, and analyzing the conceptual framework used for this study. This overview of the literature aims to explain the rationale of the study—why the Internet-based context is important in informal L2 learning process and the manner in which it supports motivation. I then turn to the research methodology, laying out the research design of the study and introducing the students participated in this study and the instrument used for collecting data. Further, I describe the data analysis procedure and the results. In the concluding chapter, I discuss the findings of this study in light of related research studies and draw implications for how the knowledge contributed by this study can help L2 educators facilitate their endeavor to computerize their pedagogical practice and to integrate the Internet into their instruction. I end with an outline of directions for further research.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is a comprehensive literature review pertaining to motivation to learn a second language (L2) in an Internet-based informal context. It consists of six parts. In the first part, I discuss the definition of informal and formal contexts and the role of informal contexts in L2 learning. In the second part, I introduce the use of the Internet in L2 learning and its impact on motivation. In this part, I also discuss the characteristics of the Internet as a language-learning tool.

In the third part of the literature review, theories of L2 motivation are addressed in sequential order. A detailed analysis is given to the development of Gardner's (1985, 2001) socio-educational model, which is chosen as the framework for this study. Further, I discuss studies that support or criticize Gardner's model and address the reasons why it is most appropriate for this study. Other motivational theories and their contribution to L2 research are also discussed.

The fourth part deals with factors related to L2 motivation. Issues such as gender, language proficiency and cultural differences are addressed. In the fifth part, attitudes and motivation to L2 learning are discussed in terms of informal contexts. Special attention is given to the Internet-based situation and the need to conduct this current research. The last part is a synthesis that overviews and summarizes this chapter.

## Informal Language Learning Contexts

### Informal vs. Formal Contexts

Language learning takes place both inside and outside the classroom, often referred to as formal and informal learning context. According to Gardner (1985, 2001), formal learning contexts refer to situations in which language instruction occurs, such as L2 classroom; and informal contexts are settings where there is no L2 instruction, but individuals might learn a language by watching movies, listening to radio, or attending language clubs.

Gardner's definition about informal contexts does not seem to cover all informal L2 learning situations. As opposed to formal contexts, any outside classroom setting that involves language acquisition could be regarded as informal. Linguist Krashen (1981) refers to informal context as any naturalistic setting where learners use the target language to interact with others. Toward a better understanding of informal contexts, Gardner (2006) redefined it as the outside classroom settings that provide opportunities to use and experience the language, for instance, social settings, language clubs, and television.

### L2 Learning in Informal Contexts

In L2 research, it is widely accepted that L2 learners need opportunities to learn and practice the target language beyond classroom achievement in their request to become proficient language learners. L2 learning is a life-long process largely involved in informal learning contexts, since most learners only have a limited period of time in language classroom. Informal contexts serve as an important source of language input and

a necessary medium of language learning and practicing.

Linguist Krashen's (1981, 2004) Comprehension Hypothesis explains why informal contexts are so important in L2 learning and how language learning occurs in informal contexts. Krashen states that we acquire language when we understand messages as well as from what we read and what people say. Further, he states that informal contexts provide the opportunities for learners to internalize the rules of a second language learned in previous formal settings.

Research studies have been done to examine the contributions of informal language learning contexts. In one of his studies, St. Martin (1980) compared the linguistic product of two groups of L2 learners who took an intensive English program. Learners in one group lived with an American family and learners in the other group lived near speakers of their native language. The researcher found that other things being equal, the group who lived with an American family had significantly higher linguistic achievements than the other group. The result indicated that more informal language experiences produced more opportunities to learn and practice the language, which facilitated L2 learning.

In a more recent study, Li (2006) explored learning English as a second language (ESL) in an informal setting. He interviewed four Chinese research students at two points in time during their first year in the UK. The students reported that they valued their current informal learning environment in general and saw it as supportive of their language learning goals.

With the development of the computer and Internet technology, language learning

occurs in new contexts. The Internet provides a worldwide literacy practice environment and has created new communication situations for language learners (Koutsogiannis & Mitsikopoulou, 2004). According to Krashen's (1981, 2004) Comprehension Hypothesis, when Internet activities involve the target language, L2 learners may, consciously or not, acquire new knowledge and skills of the language and practice what they have learned. Language learning takes place when the language is used to surf the web, obtain online information or communicate via E-mail, instant message, and online chat.

### The Internet and L2 Learning Motivation

The development of computer-related technologies, such as the Internet, multimedia, and hypermedia, have been transforming both content and delivery form in almost all fields of education. In L2 classroom, these technologies, particularly the Internet, are increasingly used and their effect on L2 learning is drawing the attention of many researchers.

### The Internet as a L2 Learning Tool

In their quest to look for more opportunities to receive language input and practice, L2 learners and teachers find that computer-related technologies may serve as a valuable potential language-learning tool. This is particularly true for English learners, as English is the language used in most computer-related technologies. These technologies are found to provide opportunities to develop and enhance learners' speaking, reading, and writing proficiency (Backer, 1998; Yang, 2001).

As an important component of computer technologies, the Internet is becoming one

of the most popular and necessary educational technologies in L2 learning and is drawing increasing research attention. The Internet is generally referred to as the services like World Wide Web (WWW), E-mail, instant message, and online chats (Wikipedia). For L2 learners, the Internet provides instant and convenient access to a range of target language experiences, and leads them to the target language environment where “real people” are using “real language” in “real context” (Osuna & Meskill, 1998).

*Computer-Mediated Communication.* Some online activities, such as E-mail, computer conference, instant message and online chat, are usually referred to as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC). CMC is becoming very popular in L2 classroom to facilitate language learning.

CMC provides a unique communication environment and has an impact on what is expressed and how it is expressed (Baron, 1984). For instance, the language used in E-mail has features associated with both spoken and formal written language (Murray, 1996). Warschauer (1997) summarizes five features that make the Internet a potentially useful tool for L2 learning. These features include: (a) text-based reflective interaction; (b) many-to-many interaction in which learners construct knowledge together and demonstrate more equal participation, (c) time and place-independent interaction which enables 24-hour communication world wide, (d) long distance interaction, (e) hypermedia support which allows lively, authentic, and dynamic learning environment.

These unique characteristics of CMC as a language-learning tool help facilitate L2 communication. Kern (1995) compared the quantity and characteristics of discourses

produced in oral and synchronous computer-based French discussion. The researcher found that students demonstrated more turns and produced more complex French sentences in the computer-based discussion. Freiermuth (2001) reported similar finding -- L2 learners appeared to be more active and contributed more in their interaction in online text chat as compared to oral conversation.

In another study, Backer (1998) described how Israeli students used English to chat with peers worldwide through the Internet. The English used in online communication is referred to as Cyber-English, which includes many acronyms, abbreviations and some other shortcuts to achieve fast message typing. Students found Cyber-English a favorable and powerful communication medium and they used emotions (smileys) to make up for the lack of non-linguistic clues in online communication. Backer suggested that this was a useful supplementary tool to conventional instruction since it was a motivating and powerful means of communication.

*Communication Apprehension.* Another major feature of online L2 communication is its impact on communication apprehension (CA). CA is defined as an individual's degree of fear, anxiety or discomfort that is associated with actual or perceived communication with others (McCroskey, Fayer & Richmond, 1985). CA is one of the three components of Foreign Language Anxiety with the other two being test anxiety and fear of evaluation (Horwitz, Horwitz & Cope, 1986). CA is a barrier to effective oral communication. It is closely associated with communication avoidance: an individual who is apprehensive about communication in the L2 is highly likely to avoid doing so,

and thus losing the opportunity to experience the oral practice of the language (McCroskey, Fayer & Richmond, 1985; Lucas, 1984).

Online L2 communication has been demonstrated as being able to (a) directly develop oral proficiency (Vetter & Chanier, 2006); (b) facilitate communication participation without producing CA (Kivela, 1996), (c) help reduce communication anxiety. Online communication can therefore promote more frequent communication production. In a study of 40 college French learners, Kern (1995) reported that the use of the network increased student autonomy, motivation, and reduced communication anxiety. In another study, Freiermuth (2001) compared L2 learners' face-to-face interaction and online text chat. The learners demonstrated being more comfortable in their online text-based communication and felt less concerned about their language proficiencies. Though Freiermuth did not label this feature as alleviation of communication apprehension, he did mention that in online chat learners' pressure were lessened and they can focus on their language production rather than allowing apprehension to hold them from oral interaction.

Yet the Internet may also have disadvantages as a language-learning medium, some of which having been identified in classroom settings. For instance, online discussion reduces teacher control, demands stronger reading skills, and may expose learners to grammatically incorrect language (Kern, 1995). Some students reported that technical problems could cause frustration while using the Internet in L2 learning (Yang, 2001). Potential disadvantages need to be identified in order to make better use of this newly developed language-learning tool.

### The Internet and L2 Motivation

Computer-related technologies as a whole are found to help increase students' enthusiasm and motivation and develop their communication skills (Lauterborn, 1997; Trosko, 1997). Among the various benefits, its positive effects on L2 motivation have been most frequently reported (Busch, 2003; Kasper, 2002; Shea, 2000). Colombo (2002) indicated that technology integrated learning seemed to motivate L2 learners to engage in literacy learning. Learners showed an enhanced interest and motivation in reading and writing and they were more enthusiastic about revising and editing their work in such situations.

Over the years, research on L2 motivation in the Internet-assisted situations centers in formal contexts – the Internet has been largely considered an effective learning and instructional tool in L2 classroom and has been found to have a positive effect on learners' motivation (Kern, 1995; Padron & Waxman, 1996; Shea, 2000). Osuna and Meskill (1998) in their study with Spanish learners found that the Web was a suitable tool to increase language and cultural knowledge, and a means to increase language motivation.

Computer-mediated Communication (CMC) has been a major application of the Internet in L2 teaching and learning. Its effect on L2 motivation has been largely researched. CMC tends to create a student-orientated learning context and students are usually motivated when using it in L2 class (Warschauer, 1997). Students who are previously passive in class tend to be more active in participation in CMC-based L2 class



(Freiermuth, 2001; Warschauer, Turbee & Roberts, 1996).

Computer Conferencing (CC), a form of CMC, has also been found to have a positive effect on L2 motivation (Skinner & Austin, 1999). The researchers investigated L2 learners using a computer conference software program. They found that students had a positive attitude toward CC, and it had a great effect on students' foreign language learning motivation. Based on students' responses to the survey, they identified three sources of motivation: (a) CC provided an opportunity for 'real' communication and encouraged students to become part of a learning community, (b) it increased personal confidence, and (c) it overcame students' writing apprehension by broadening their writing skills. The researchers believed that these three factors supported an intrinsic category of motivation and they associated their first two factors to Dörnyei's (1994) classification of different motivation levels (language, learner, and learning situation level).

Though some CMC and CC situations discussed above are only based on computer network, not the real Internet-based contexts, they are very similar ones given that they provide both asynchronous and synchronous communication as the Internet does. Some of the research findings, therefore, could be applied to the Internet-based learning context.

## Theories of L2 Motivation

Learning an L2 is required or highly recommended at almost all levels of academic learning across countries. Exploring the factors that would promote learning performance remains a major issue in L2 research. Many factors have been found related to language learning achievements, such as learners' attitudes, motivation, language anxiety, self-confidence, personality variables, linguistic aptitude, and language learning strategies. Some of these factors are dependent on motivation for the extent to which their effects could be realized (Gardner, 2001). In L2 learning theory it has generally been accepted that learners with higher levels of motivation will be higher achievers and motivation is a central element together with linguistic aptitude in determining L2 learning achievement (Gardner, 1985).

Among many theories on L2 motivation, the socio-educational model proposed by Robert Gardner (1985), a Canadian psychologist, has been the most frequently used and remained dominant and influential for decades.

### The Socio-educational Model

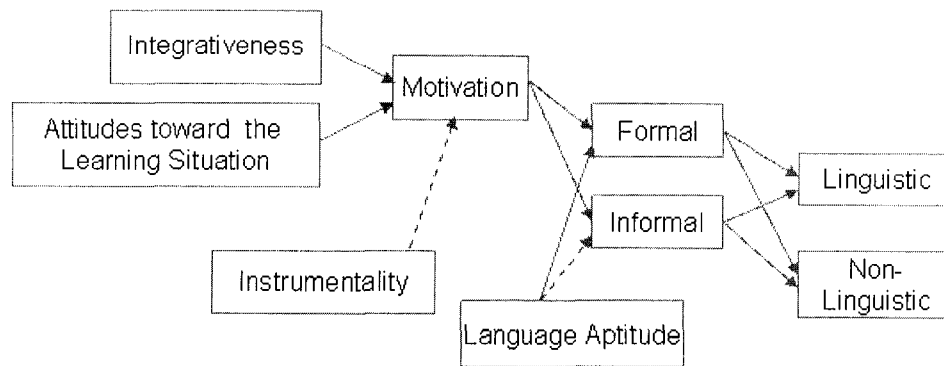
The socio-educational model was proposed in a context in which English-speaking Canadians were studying French as a second language. It presents the causes and determinants of L2 learning achievement, focusing on the role attitudes and motivation play in learning process. Attitudinal foundations that sustain motivation are also demonstrated in the model given that L2 learning is a long and effort-demanding process and learners need to be consistently motivated (Gardner, 1985).

Attitudes and motivation are at the core of Gardner's model. Based on empirical evidence, Gardner proposes that individual's favorable attitudes toward the target language group (identified as integrativeness) and the language-learning situation influence his/her level of motivation; and that motivation accounts for a significant and meaningful proportion of the difference in L2 achievement. L2 achievement is largely affected by individual's level of motivation to learn the language

Figure 1 shows a schematic presentation of the socio-educational model. In brief, the model could be described as: learners' integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation serve as the cause and supports for motivation. These attitudes are regarded as necessary attitudinal foundations that sustain L2 motivation. Motivation and language aptitude are two major determinants of learners' linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes in both formal and informal contexts. Non-linguistic outcomes refer to attitudes, values or motivation that develop from the learning experience. It is worth noticing that language aptitude is shown to have an indirect effect (as indicated by the broken line) in informal contexts, since it can only come into play when the individual has been motivated to enter the informal learning situation. Other factors may have an impact on motivation as well, such as instrumentality.

Figure 1

The Socio-educational Model (Gardner, 1985)



In the socio-educational model, constructs, such as Motivation and integrativeness, are consisted of and assessed by sub-scales. The following is an explanation of the constructs and their sub-scales.

*Motivation.* Gardner defines motivation as the driving force in any situation and proposes that L2 motivation, in particular, involves three elements: the effort expended to learn the language, the desire to achieve the goal, and the positive affect of the learning task. The construct of Motivation is, therefore, measured by three scales: Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, and Attitudes toward Learning English.

*Integrativeness.* Learning an L2 is different from any other subject in that it involves the target language cultural group. Intergrativeness reflects an interest in the target group and an openness to take on characteristics of the target culture and

community. It is reflected and assessed by three scales: Integrative Orientation, Attitude toward the L2 community, and Interest in Foreign Languages.

*Attitudes toward the Learning Situation.* Attitudes toward the learning situation refer to attitudes toward any aspect of the L2 learning setting. In classroom setting, learning situation involves the teacher, materials and activities related to the course. Learners' affective reactions to these aspects will possibly result in more favorable attitudes and consequently, higher levels of motivation. The construct of Attitudes toward the Learning Situation is reflected by two scales: Teacher Evaluation and Course Evaluation.

The nature of an L2 learning situation tends to have an impact on motivation. It can either promote or decrease motivation, which is regarded by Gardner as a non-linguistic outcome that comes into play in subsequent language learning experiences. It has educational significance to explore the nature of varied situations that could enhance L2 motivation and identify the factors that contribute to learners' favorable attitudes toward them.

*Instrumentality.* Instrumentality refers to conditions where an individual learns an L2 for practical, economic, and utilitarian benefits or advantages, such as obtaining a job. It is identified as a possible factor that may contribute to motivation, which reflects the recognition that for some L2 learners it is the usefulness of the language proficiency that provides the drive. The construct of Instrumentality is measured by one scale: Instrumental Orientation.

Apart from the constructs discussed above, Gardner also proposes the concept of orientation in his model. Orientation represents a class of reasons and goals to learn the language and it is a stimulus that gives rise to motivation that reflects the power to achieve the goal. But an oriented individual is not necessarily being motivated to expend effort. Gardner proposes two key orientations: integrative orientation and instrumental orientation.

Integrative orientation is identified as a subscale under Integrativeness. It stresses the value of learning an L2 to become part of the target culture, which means learners learn the L2 in order to better understand people of the target language and their way of life. Instrumental orientation is a subscale of Instrumentality. It reflects the drive of learning an L2 for pragmatic and economic advantages.

Gardner proposes that integrative and instrumental orientations indicate the reasons why learners learn an L2. These reasons do not represent the most immediate goal but rather some ultimate goal for achieving the immediate goal of learning an L2. Table 1 is an illustration of the constructs and their scales in Gardner's socio-educational model.

Table 1

## Constructs and Scales of the Socio-educational Model

Constructs	Scales
Motivation	Motivational Intensity Desire to Learn the Language Attitudes toward Learning the Language
Integrativeness	Integrative Orientation Attitudes toward the Target Group Interest in Foreign Languages
Attitudes toward the Learning Situation	Teacher Evaluation Course Evaluation
Instrumentality	Instrumental Orientation

Revised Socio-educational Model

Gardner (2001) made some revisions and provided more explanation to his socio-educational model. The following was added to the 1985 version: (a) integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation are two correlated supports for motivation, (b) it is motivation that is responsible for L2 learning achievement, (c) integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation have their effect on learning outcomes through motivation, without which they are not related to outcomes.

Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

Major constructs and scales in the socio-educational model are not only operationally defined but can also be assessed (Gardner, 1985). Gardner and his associates established scientific research procedures and introduced standardized

assessment techniques and instrument in L2 motivation research (Dörnyei, 1994). The instrument Gardner (1985) created to assess attitudes and motivation is called Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). AMTB consists of over a hundred items measuring 5 constructs and 11 scales.

### Research Supports the Model

Many studies follow Gardner's social-educational model and use versions of AMTB to investigate the role of attitudes and motivation in L2 learning achievement and the relation among the constructs in the model. Positive relationships exist between language achievements and motivation (Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Tennant & Gardner, 1999). In an attempt to estimate the magnitude of effect of attitudes and motivation on L2 achievements, Masgoret and Gardner (2003) conducted a meta-analysis of studies by Gardner and his associates. This analysis looked at 75 samples involving 10,498 participants. They found that L2 achievement has homogeneously higher correlations with motivation than with other constructs of the model.

Studies have demonstrated that integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation influence and support L2 motivation (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Tennant & Gardner, 1999). Csizér and Dörnyei's study investigated motives grounded in the student's past experiences in the social milieu. They found that integrativeness was a central factor in the L2 motivation construct. Further, they found that other motivational factors affect learning behaviors (including L2 choice and intended effort) through integrativeness.



It was also found that the aggregate of motivation, integrativeness, and attitudes toward the learning situation (a) were highly and positively correlated with learners' effort expended, (b) significant predictors of language achievement; (c) were also significant predictors of a desire to continue learning the L2 beyond the course requirement (Hernández, 2005). The last finding could act as evidence supporting their significant role in informal learning contexts.

Apart from formal contexts, the socio-educational model was also tested in and has been generalized to informal contexts. Comparable results were found of the relationships among the major variables in the model. Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) investigated an informal context: Spanish children participating in the *Enjoy English* summer language program. They reported that L2 achievement was significantly correlated with motivation. The study also found significant correlations between motivation and both integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation.

As informal learning situation is different from classroom setting, Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) adapted Evaluation to Teacher and Course (scales used to measure the construct of Attitudes toward the Learning Situation) in AMTB to Attitudes toward the Informal Situation. This modified version of AMTB was proved to be reliable and valid in this informal context, which indicated that AMTB could be generalized to informal contexts as well.

### Other Motivational Theories

*Intrinsic vs. Extrinsic Motivation.* Another framework in L2 motivation is related to the distinction between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, which is one of the most well known concepts in general motivational theories (Dörnyei, 1994). In their Self-determination Theory, Deci and Ryan (1985) suggest the importance of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation in L2 learning setting. This construct has been drawing increasing attention in L2 motivation literature since then (Noels, 2003; Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 2001; Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2000). Intrinsic motivation describes the performing of a task because it is enjoyable and satisfying; and extrinsically motivated behaviors, on the other hand, are the ones that the individual carried out to receive something instrumental, such as the offer of a reward or the avoidance of punishment (Noels, Pelletier, Clement & Vallerand, 2000).

Some researchers have attempted to explore the similarity between the intrinsic/extrinsic distinction and the integrative/instrumental construct. Noels and her colleagues (Noels, 2003; Noels, Clement, & Pelletier, 2001) reported that integrative orientation was most strongly correlated with intrinsic orientation though they were not the same construct. Gardner (1985) proposed that both the integrative and instrumental orientations were extrinsic because they referred to learning the language in order to achieve some goals, such as getting identified with the target community, not simply due to an intrinsic interest or satisfaction in the language learning itself. Skinner and Austin

(1999) had similar understanding. They believed that extrinsic motivation was a wider category that includes integrative/instrumental distinction.

*New Research Agenda.* A review by Crookes and Schmidt (1991), pointed out that Gardner focused on the motivational factors that were relatively stable but did not give enough emphasis on L2 classrooms and teachers. Also, his research and the socio-educational model were set up from a social psychological perspective that did not reflect educators' true understanding. This review called for a new approach to L2 motivation research that would be more pertinent to L2 teaching.

Beyond the scales and constructs proposed in Gardner's (1985) model, researchers have been trying to find other possible factors that motivate L2 learning. Oxford and Shearin (1994) investigated 218 American high school students who were learning Japanese as a foreign language. Students reported many reasons to learn Japanese, such as seeking personal challenge, showing off to friends, having a private code that parents do not know, satisfying curiosity about cultural "secrets" and so on. Oxford and Shearin claimed that these were additional reasons besides integrative and instrumental orientations. The researcher of this present study argues that these reasons could be either reflected in attitudes toward L2 culture (such as satisfying curiosity about cultural "secrets"), or they are related to pragmatic goals (such as showing off to friends or having a private code that parents do not know). The reasons reported by the Japanese learners could, therefore, be put into the integrative/instrumental orientation categories. Instrumental orientation should not be narrowly understood only as getting a job or

gaining a reward. It may include any pragmatic reasons or benefits that provide the driving force to learn L2.

Another criticism about Gardner's model is the issue of second vs. foreign language context. A foreign language is learned in an environment where the language is not normally used as the medium of ordinary communication, for example, Chinese students may learn English as a foreign language in China; While a second language is learned in an environment where it is used by the majority people in their daily communication, for instance, English is learned as a second language by non-English speakers in Canada or US (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Gardner's model is based on Anglophone Canadians who learn French as a second language in Quebec. Some researchers question its applicability to all L2 contexts (Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Dörnyei, 1994; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). It is argued that generalizations based on his model, such as the important and necessary effect integrativeness has on motivation, might not be suitable for other foreign language learners. These learners mainly learn and practice the L2 in classroom and they do not have enough opportunities to interact or communicate with the target language people and community (Dörnyei, 1994).

There is no doubt that second language learners may have more feelings and understanding toward the target culture and community given that they live in the community and personally experience the culture. However, with the process of globalization and with the development of various technologies, such as the Internet and multimedia, it is becoming easier for foreign language learners to access information

about the target culture and community. The line between second and foreign language are blurred due to the shortening of distance in virtual communication.

Dörnyei (1994) took an educational psychological perspective and pointed out that the main emphasis in Gardner's model is on general motivational factors grounded in the social milieu rather than in L2 classroom. He argued that the scales in AMTB about language teacher and courses do not provide detailed enough information of the classroom situation to be helpful for practical purposes. Dörnyei and other researchers were seeking a new approach to L2 motivation research that would (a) be more pragmatic and education-centered, (b) be consistent with perceptions of L2 teachers, and (c) be in line with the current research development of educational psychology (Dörnyei, 1994).

Dörnyei (1994) claimed that L2 motivation is an eclectic, multifaceted construct and should be assessed from educational psychological perspectives. He presented a new framework (see Table 2) of L2 motivation. This new framework consists of three levels of motivation: the Language Level, the Learner Level, and the Learning Situation Level. These three levels parallel three basic components of L2 learning process — the language, the learner, and the learning environment. They also reflect the three dimensions of L2 learning, namely, the social dimension, the personal dimension, and the educational subject matter dimension.

Table 2

## Components of Foreign Language Learning Motivation (Dörnyei, 1994)

LANGUAGE LEVEL	Integrative Motivational Subsystem Instrumental Motivational Subsystem
LEARNER LEVEL	Need for Achievement Self-Confidence *Language Use Anxiety *Perceived L2 Competence *Causal Attributions *Self-Efficacy
LEARNING SITUATION LEVEL	
Course -Specific Motivational Component	Interest Relevance Expectancy Satisfaction
Teacher -Specific Motivational Component	Affiliative Drive Authority Type Direct Socialization of Motivation *Modeling *Task Presentation *Feedback
Group -Specific Motivational Component	Goal-orientedness Norm & Reward System Group Cohesion Classroom Goal Structure

The figure shows that (a) the Language Level focuses on orientations and motives and it can be reflected in Gardner's (1985) integrative and instrumental orientation category; (b) the Learner Level is associated with personality traits. Need for Achievement and Self-Confidence are identified as two motivational components at this level; (c) the Learning Situation Level consists of intrinsic and extrinsic motives and involves three areas: Course-Specific, Teacher-Specific, and Group-Specific Motivational Components.

Dörnyei claimed that this framework could be useful for researchers and instructors to identify motivational sources in order to develop motivational strategies. He further listed some strategies to motivate L2 learning, especially concerning the Learning Situation Level. As for the Language and Learner Level, he explained that they “tend to be more generalized and established and, therefore, do not lend themselves as easily to manipulations or modifications” (Dörnyei, 1994, p280).

Dörnyei (1994) provides us with a comprehensive and multifaceted conceptual framework from both social and educational psychological perspective. This new framework helps explain varied motivational factors in specific L2 learning situation. However, it is hard to measure that large number of scales empirically and there is no standardized instrument so far to assess major variables under this framework.

#### Framework for this Study

Among the theories discussed above, Gardner’s model is most appropriate for this study, because (a) it has considerable influence in L2 motivation literature and has been used as the framework for many studies; (b) it has a standardized instrument to assess L2 attitudes and motivation in the model, (c) it is one of the few frameworks in L2 motivation which include informal learning contexts, (d) although it is criticized for not giving enough attention to formal classroom context, the model will work well for this present study which focuses on an informal learning context and involves no instructor or classroom activities.

Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) will be used as the instrument for this study because (a) it matches Gardner's socio-educational model and also the framework of this study; (b) it has been the most widely used instrument in L2 motivation research; (c) its modified version has been proved to be reliable and valid in other informal contexts.

*Operative Constructs in Gardner's Model.* Gardner (2001) investigated the changes of attitudes and motivation over time and assessed the stability of the variables in his model. He surveyed French learners in a university French course twice (in September and the next March respectively) using AMTB. Gardner found that only integrativeness and instrumental orientations are relatively stable; while attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation are relatively flexible. These results suggest that (a) appropriate instruction and intervention may improve both attitudes toward the learning situation and motivation; (b) those teachers and learning situations that are appealing to learners contribute to more positive attitudes toward the learning situation which promote higher levels of motivation. Though teachers or instruction are not involved in informal contexts, these findings provide significant suggestions for research in informal contexts.

There are more varied language learning situations in informal than formal context. Characteristics of a situation may, or may not, contribute to learners' more positive attitudes toward the situation. It is of significant importance to understand the characteristics of informal situations that are appealing to learners given that they spend a

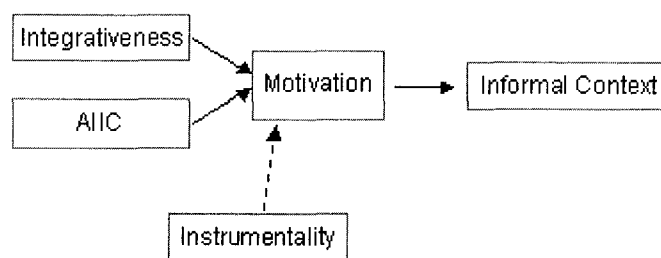


lot of time learning L2 in informal context than in formal classroom setting. An Internet-based informal context is the focus of this study.

*Framework of this Study.* According to Gardner's socio-educational model, motivation is supported and sustained by some necessary attitudinal foundations, namely, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. Among the varied informal learning contexts, I am going to explore the Internet-based situation and examine learners' attitudes toward this Internet-based informal context (AIIC). In this study, I examine how learners are motivated to learn L2 in informal contexts and whether they have integrativeness and AIIC as necessary attitudinal foundations to sustain motivation. Instrumentality as a possible factor that supports L2 motivation will be investigated as well. Figure 2 is a presentation of the modified socio-educational model used in this study.

Figure 2

Presentation of the Framework for this Study



## Factors Related to L2 Attitudes & Motivation

Researchers have long been engaged in investigating individual difference in L2 learning. Some studies provide significant findings on the relationships between L2 achievement and learners' motivation, age, gender, intelligence and learning strategies (Li, 2005, Oxford, 1992). Other studies focus on analyzing the relationships between L2 learners' motivation and other factors like gender, cultural settings, and proficiency levels.

### Gender Differences

Gender differences have been found in attitudes and motivation toward L2 learning. Shaaban and Ghaith (2000) found that as compared to their male counterparts, females were more likely to report that they had open and positive attitudes toward L2 learning and would extend effort in the process. Mori and Gobel (2006) reported that females scored significantly higher on the items of integrativeness than males. In another study, Scott (2006) claimed that male learners demonstrated the lack of motivation to learn French as a second language.

In Dörnyei and Csizer's (2002) longitudinal research study, they explored gender difference of both language choice and commitment showed during the learning process. More girls than boys reported choosing French and Italian in both years (1993 & 1999); while English, German, and Russian could be seen as more "masculine" languages. Once the choice of language has been made, girls showed more commitment than boys regardless of what the actual second language was.

### Cultural Differences

In the past, motivational research used to center on the cultural contexts that were close to North American or European values and some studies conducted in other cultures commonly employed the same frames that are based on students learning English as a second language (ESL). In recent years, however, researchers realize that cultural difference may have an impact on L2 motivation and they have started to examine motivational constructs in various cultural settings.

In a Chinese EFL context, where large numbers of students are required to study English, Chen, Warden and Chang (2005) explored the influence of Chinese culture on EFL learners' motivation. EFL learners in Taiwan responded to an online questionnaire. The researchers found that Integrativeness might not be a significant factor in motivating English learning in the Chinese cultural context. Expectancy was found to be an intervening factor between motivation orientations and English proficiency. The strongest link to expectancy was the so-called "required motivation". Chen et al. discussed "required orientation" in relation to Chinese cultural and educational history and named it the Chinese Imperative. Their explanation could have been more comprehensive if they addressed the fact that, although English was required as a foreign language, students in Taiwan were largely exposed to Japanese culture and language, which might influence Taiwanese EFL learners' motivational construct.

### Language Proficiency

Language proficiency has always been in the center of L2 research topics. On the one hand, it is the goal of L2 learning to develop higher language proficiency; on the other hand, it has mutual impact with many other individual differences. Researchers have been investigating whether the level of English proficiency made a difference in motivation and reported different findings.

Some researchers found that more proficient students demonstrated stronger motivation toward L2 learning and exerted more effort than their less proficient counterparts (Coleman, 1995; Sung & Padilla, 1998). In another study, Shaaban and Ghaith (2000), however, reported contradictory findings. The researchers investigated Lebanese EFL learners who were enrolled in the University Orientation Program and found that the less proficient students were actually more motivated than their more proficient counterparts. The authors explained that the finding might be a result of the eagerness of low-proficiency students to engage in learning in order to get in the university as soon as possible. However, the authors failed to take into account that the English proficiency of their so-called more proficient students was still relatively low, since all participants were enrolled in the program because they did not get the required score in the English language admission test. So their generalization of the relationship between motivation and proficiency level could only apply to learners with relatively low L2 proficiency.

In some studies, factors like socio-economic status (SES) and major of study

demonstrate their relation to learners' attitudes motivation toward L2 learning. For instance, Pakistani college level English learners who were from high SES reported more positive attitudes toward their language learning than their low SES counterparts (Ghani, 2003). Chen (2006) found that students in Health Care Administration program expressed higher expectations that English was the current primary language as compared to students in Nursing. Shaaban and Ghaith (2000), however, claimed that no significant difference in L2 motivation was found among different majors.

Research about L2 motivation centers in classroom settings. Though participants' age ranges from grade school to university level, within each study, their age is rather similar given that they are classmates. Researchers proposed either similar or different motivational constructs in their particular context, but few of them discussed whether age could be a factor influence L2 motivation (Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005, Dörnyei & Csizer, 2002, Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000).

The factors discussed above have been mostly investigated in formal classroom settings. Whether these factors would make the same difference in learners' attitudes and motivation in informal setting remains unexplored. This is one of the goals of this present study.

#### Computer & Internet Self-Efficacy

Perceived self-efficacy refers to beliefs and expectations in one's compatibility to perform in a given task (Bandura, Pastorelli, Barbaranelli & Caprara, 1999). Computer & Internet self-efficacy reflects computer and Internet users' self-perceived confidence,

competence and expectations of using these technologies (Wu, & Tsai, 2006). Computer & Internet self-efficacy has been proposed to have an impact on individual's attitudes toward the computer/Internet-related activities (Levine & Donitsa-Schmidt, 1997, 1998; Wu, & Tsai, 2006). Few studies have researched whether computer & Internet self-efficacy affect individual's attitudes toward the Internet-based language-learning situation. It is another goal of this study to examine the relationship between Computer & Internet Self-Efficacy & AIIC.

### Attitudes and Motivation in Informal Contexts

The importance of formal contexts in L2 learning has been discussed above. However, L2 learners need to make a persistent attempt to develop their language proficiency in informal contexts in their quest to become proficient language learners. Learners in informal contexts need to do more self-directed and regulated work, and constantly seek opportunities for learning and practice (Gardener, 2001). Motivation plays an important role and has a major and long lasting direct effect in informal learning contexts. It largely depends on motivation whether or not an individual would opt in informal learning experience, how much time and effort the individual would like to spend on the activities, and how consistent the effort could be (Gardener, 2001).

Though its importance has been addressed repeatedly in L2 literature, few studies actually investigated L2 motivation in informal contexts as compared to formal contexts. In one of these studies, Li (2006) interviewed four ESL learners in an informal context. He found that his four participants believed learning English was important and they were

motivated to learn English – they set learning goals and exerted sustained effort to achieve the goals. Their goals were identified as being instrumental and extrinsic orientation. In another study of informal context, Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) reported that L2 achievement was significantly correlated with motivation, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation.

### Internet-based Informal Context

Attitudes toward the learning situation act as attitudinal foundation for L2 motivation. There are varied learning situations in informal contexts. The Internet-based learning situation is one of them and is an important one. It can provide opportunities for language learning and practice to occur in informal contexts. According to Krashen's (1981, 2004) Comprehension Hypothesis, we acquire our L2 reading and spelling ability, our vocabulary knowledge, as well as our ability to handle complex syntax from reading. In this sense, the Internet offers rich language input. It is particularly true when it comes to learning a second language in the target community, since the language serves as the working language for most online services. There is a need to understand L2 learners' attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context, and the impact it has on L2 motivation.

In some circumstances, students are required to use the Internet in their L2 classroom. In an informal context, however, learners have the choice whether or not to use their native language to do online activities, as it may be more efficient and effective to read and write. For instance, they may prefer visiting websites that are in their native

language, or using their native language to conduct online communications. It is therefore reasonable to propose that, if learners opt in the target language online environment in informal contexts, there must be something of this particular learning situation that is appealing to them. Some characteristics of the Internet-based formal learning contexts are discussed above. But we need to understand whether these characteristics also attract learners to get involved in the learning experience when it is not required. Another research concern in this study is to explore the characteristics of the Internet that contribute to learners' participation in this informal context.

### Synthesis

L2 learning occurs in both formal and informal contexts. Motivation is an important factor in successful L2 learning and plays a major and long lasting role in informal contexts. It is educationally important to understand L2 motivation in informal contexts and the attitudinal foundations that sustain motivation.

The Internet as an important educational technology is drawing increasing attention in L2 research. A review of literature reveals that while L2 motivation in formal contexts and the impact of the Internet on it have received attention from massive bodies of research, few studies have investigated the situation in informal contexts and little is known whether L2 learning in an Internet-based context would help sustain learners' motivation.

In this study, the researcher will explore learners' attitudes and motivation toward L2 learning in informal contexts. Further, she will examine the Internet-based informal



learning context and investigate how it would have an influence on L2 learning motivation.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

#### Participants

For the purpose of this present study, university Chinese ESL learners were surveyed in order to understand their attitudes and motivation to learn English using the Internet in informal contexts. The researcher took a convenient sample. The participants were recruited in two ways: A poster advertising the study on the Chinese Students & Scholars Association (CSSA) website at a southern Ontario university helped recruit potential candidates. Further, participants were recruited through researchers' direct contact in the target university community. Through a snowballing effect, those participants then helped recruit others.

According to Nardi (2005), a sample size of 50 participants would be appropriate for a short survey for class projects or theses. The researcher surveyed a total of 114 Chinese ESL students who were currently enrolled at a Southern Ontario university. Among these participants, 4 did not complete the questionnaire and 3 were taking ESL class the time they responded to the questionnaire. Therefore, only 107 responses were used for data analysis.

The participants in this study met the following criteria: (a) had to be a Chinese ESL student, (b) had access to the Internet, (c) had to be familiar with the Internet, (d) were not currently taking ESL class. Each participant was given a Letter of Consent and a Letter of Information to read and sign before he/she was given the questionnaire.

## Instrumentation

In this survey study, the researcher has chosen to follow Gardner's (1985, 2001) socio-educational model in order to explore students' attitudes and motivation toward ESL learning in informal contexts and investigate how the use of the Internet have an impact on their attitudes and motivation. The questionnaire used in this study consists of three sections.

### Section 1

The first section aimed to obtain participants' demographic information. The following information was requested: age, gender, educational level, score of language proficiency test, years of learning English, length of stay in Canada, access to the Internet, length of time spent on the Internet daily, frequency of visiting ESL websites, and the proportion of English knowledge that were gained from Internet experience.

### Section 2

The second section was to investigate students' attitudes and motivation toward learning English in informal contexts. Items were adapted from Gardner, Tremblay and Masgoret's (1997) version of Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). ATMB has demonstrated reliability and validity (Gardner, Tremblay & Masgoret, 1997). AMTB was created to measure English speakers learning French as a second language in formal classroom context. In order to fit in this particular study, items were adapted in terms of (1) Chinese learners learning English as a second language, (2) in an Internet-based informal context. Items in this section were rated on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from –

3 (strong disagreement) to + 3 (strong agreement) (see Table 3). Participants were asked to check a response that best represents their opinion about the item.

Table 3

The Representation of the Likert Scale

-3	-2	-1	0	1	2	3
Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree

In AMTB, constructs, such as Integrativeness and Motivation, are measured by scales. For instance, Motivation is assessed by three scales – Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn the Language, and Attitudes toward Learning the Language.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher used 8 scales (see Table 4) to examine 4 constructs: Motivation, Integrativeness, Instrumentality, and Attitudes toward the Learning situation. Most of the scales in AMTB consist of both positively and negatively worded items. In this present study, we include positively worded items only, given that it would make it easier for participants to better understand the items and choose the responses that rate their true feelings. To keep the questionnaire at an appropriate length, the number of items in each scale was cut down to two and items were randomly ordered (except for Attitudes toward the Learning situation, which consisted of 8 items and were all put at the end of this section). The following is a detailed description of the constructs and scales used in this study.

Table 4

Constructs and Scales Assessed in this Study

Constructs	Scales
Motivation	Motivational Intensity
	Desire to Learn English
	Attitudes toward Learning English
Integrativeness	Integrative Orientation
	Attitudes toward English Community
	Interest in Foreign Languages
Instrumentality	Instrumental Orientation
Attitudes toward the Learning Situation	Attitudes toward the Internet-based Informal Context (AIIIC)

The construct of Motivation was measured by the scale of Motivational intensity, Desire to learn English, and Attitudes toward learning English.

Motivational Intensity: a high score in Motivational Intensity reflects a large amount of effort expended to learn English. It was measured by item 5 and 10.

Desire to Learn English: a high score in Desire to learn English indicates a strong desire to learn English. It was measured by item 2 and 11.

Attitudes toward Learning English: a high score represents a positive attitude toward learning English. It was measured by item 3 and 6.

The construct of Integrativeness was assessed by three scales: Attitudes toward English Culture, Interest in Foreign Languages, and Integrative Orientation.

Attitudes toward English Culture: a high score reflects positive attitudes toward English culture. It was measured by item 1 and 12.

Interest in Foreign Languages: a high score represents a high level of interest in

foreign languages. It was measured by item 8 and 13.

Integrative Orientation: a high score indicates a high degree to which learners want to learn English for integrative reasons. It was measured by item 4 and 14.

The construct of Instrumentality was assessed by the scale of Instrumental Orientation. A high score in Instrumental Orientation indicates high extent to which learners want to learn English for instrumental reasons. It was measured by item 7 and 9.

In AMTB, Attitudes toward the Learning Situation was reflected in two scales: Teacher Evaluation and Course Evaluation. Teacher Evaluation scale was not used since this present study is about L2 motivation in informal context which does not involve any teacher. To fit into the Internet-based situation, in our modified version of AMTB, Course Evaluation scale was adapted accordingly to Attitudes toward Learning English in an Internet-based situation (AIIC). A high score in AIIC represents positive attitudes toward learning English in the Internet-based situation. It was measured by item 15 to 22.

The last question (question 23) in this section was to assess participants' self-efficacy in working with computer and the Internet. A high score indicates high level of perceived computer and Internet self-efficacy.

### Section 3

The third section was to explore the characteristics of the Internet that may contribute to participants' AIIC. It consisted of 5 questions in total. There were two 7-point Likert scale questions assessing participants' attitudes toward using English on the Internet. Each question was followed by an open-ended question for participants to

explain what contributed to their attitudes. The fifth question was also an open-ended question. Participants were required to elaborate on their personal experience or concerns about learning ESL using the Internet in informal contexts.

The whole questionnaire was written in English with simple vocabulary. Chinese students usually start learning English in grade five to six. By the time they go to university, they have been learning English for at least seven to eight years. Therefore, they should have no problem understanding items in the questionnaire. It will take approximately 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Data Analysis Procedures

##### Research Question 1

What are university Chinese students' ESL motivation and orientations in informal contexts?

Before L2 learning takes place, L2 learners need to have reasons for learning the language. Following Gardner's socio-educational model, the mean of Integrative and Instrumental Orientation are computed respectively, in order to examine the reasons why Chinese students learn English, that is, their orientations for ESL learning. Taking integrative orientation as an example, it stresses the value of learning an L2 to become part of the target culture, which means learners learn the L2 in order to better understand people of the target language and their way of life. The mean score of Integrative Orientation may range from -3, meaning no integrative reason at all, to 3, indicating extremely strong integrative reason. Any result above zero indicates some degree of integrative orientation. The mean score of Integrative and Instrumental Orientation is compared. Higher integrative orientation score indicates that participants are more Integratively oriented, and vice versa.

Following Gardner's socio-educational model, motivation is assessed by three scales: Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, and Attitudes toward Learning English. The aggregate score of these three scales is computed to explore learners'



motivation. The result may range from  $-9$ , meaning no motivation at all, to  $9$ , indicating extremely high level of motivation. Any result above zero indicates some degree of motivation.

Integrativeness is one of the two supportive sources of L2 motivation. The aggregate score of Attitudes toward English Culture, Interest in Foreign Languages, and Integrative Orientation is computed to assess students' integrativeness. The result may range from  $-9$ , meaning no integrativeness at all, to  $9$ , indicating extremely high level of integrativeness. Any result above zero indicates some degree of Integrativeness. Positive Integrativeness will support and help sustain L2 motivation in informal contexts.

#### Research Question 2

How does an Internet-based informal learning context help support ESL motivation?

To answer this question, we need to know what are students' attitudes toward ESL learning in an Internet-based informal context. Socio-educational model (1985, 2001) postulates that motivation is caused by, or supported by, two attitudinal factors: integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation. In formal classroom contexts, attitudes toward L2 learning situation are assessed by Evaluation of L2 Teacher and Course.

There is neither L2 teacher nor course in informal contexts. AIIC are therefore measured by students' attitudes toward their overall experience of L2 learning using the Internet. The mean score of the six items that measure students' attitudes toward the learning situation is computed. The results may range from  $-3$ , meaning extremely

negative attitudes, to 3, indicating extremely positive attitudes. Any results above zero indicate positive attitudes to some degree. Positive attitudes help support ESL motivation, while negative attitudes may have negative influence on it.

The correlation and covariance of L2 Motivation and AIIC are computed to examine how much of the motivation change are decided by attitudes change.

### Research Question 3

What are the specific characteristics of the Internet that have an impact on students' attitudes toward learning English using the Internet?

Participants were asked to talk about what they like or dislike about ESL learning using the Internet – they were requested to compare it with other ways of learning or reflect on their personal experiences or concerns. Their responses are coded and analyzed. Those favorable factors are regarded as having a positive impact on their attitudes.

### Research question 4

What are the factors that influence university Chinese students' attitudes and motivation to learn ESL in informal contexts?

Factors like age, gender, major of program, computer and Internet self-efficacy, current educational level, score of English proficiency test are correlated with learners' motivation, integrativeness, AIIC, integrative and instrumental orientation. Correlation coefficients are computed to examine the relationships between these factors and the attitudes and motivation.

## Findings

The data obtained were computer-coded. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to perform data analysis in order to answer the research questions. One of the conventions in social science research is that if the probability of getting a statistic by chance alone is less than 5 percent, we can declare that the finding is statistically significant (Nardy, 2005). In this study, the level of statistical significance was set at  $p < .05$ .

### Demographic Data

Demographic information about the participants was presented in Table 5 and 6. A total of 114 Chinese ESL students who were currently enrolled at a Southern Ontario university participated in this study. Among these participants, 4 did not complete the questionnaire and 3 were taking ESL class the time they responded to the questionnaire. Therefore, only 107 responses were used for data analysis.

In this convenient sample, the participants' age ranges from 18 to 44 (Mean = 27.24). There are 43 females and 64 males; 25 undergraduate students and 82 graduate students. Participants are from a variety of programs: 46 are from the Faculty of Science and 47 from the Faculty of Engineering. The rest 14 participants from other faculties or departments are put into the category of *Other*.

Table 5

## Demographic Results (1)

	<i>N</i>	<i>Range</i>	<i>Mean</i>
Age	107	18 - 44	27.24
Years in Canada	107	0.3 - 6	2.71
Years learning English	107	2 - 23	13.09
Hours on Internet daily	107	0.5 - 12	4.74
TOEFL score	90	530 - 667	607.8
Years after TOEFL	90	1 - 10	3.37

Table 6

## Demographic Results (2)

	<i>N (%)</i>
Gender	
Male	64 (59.8%)
Female	43 (40.2%)
Major of study	
Engineering	47 (43.9%)
Science	46 (43.0%)
Other	14 (13.1%)

	<i>N (%)</i>
Current Education level	
Undergrad student	25 (23.4%)
Grad student	82 (76.6%)
Access to Internet	
Yes	105 (98.1%)
No	2 (1.9%)
Frequency/ESL website	
Daily	2 (1.9%)
Weekly	6 (5.6%)
Monthly	15 (14.0%)
Yearly	12 (11.2%)
Never	72 (67.3%)
English gained from Internet	
10%	3 (2.8%)
20%	67 (62.6%)
40%	28 (26.2%)
60%	6 (5.6%)
80%	2 (1.9%)

On average, they have been in Canada for 2.71 years and they have been learning English for 13.09 years. A total of 90 participants took TOEFL test. Among them, 75 took the paper-based test and 15 took the computer-based. All computer-based test scores were

converted to paper-based scores. Participants have an average score of 607.8 in their TOEFL test. They took the TOEFL test 3.37 years ago on average.

Ninety-eight percent participants have access to the Internet at home and they spend an average of 4.74 hours on the Internet everyday. The majority (78.5%) of them go to ESL learning websites from “yearly” to “never”. Only 7.5% of them go to ESL learning website on a daily to weekly basis and 14% monthly. Approximately 30% of their newly developed knowledge and skills of English are gained from their Internet experience.

#### Motivation & Orientations

Motivation is measured by three scales in AMTB, namely, Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English and Attitudes toward English. The mean score of each scale was computed (see Table 7). Moderate positive means were found for the scale of Motivational Intensity (Mean=1.416) and Attitudes toward English (Mean=1.486); a higher mean was found for Desire to Learn English (Mean=1.921).

The score of Motivation was computed by adding up the mean of each three scales. Positive score (4.822) was found for Motivation with a standard deviation of 2.678, which indicates that the majority of the participants (68%) reported their motivation between 2.144 and 7.500.

The mean of Integrative and Instrumental Orientation were computed. A high mean of 2.098 were found for Integrative Orientation as compared to that of the Instrumental Orientation (Mean=1.944). Paired Sample T Test was performed to compare

Table 7

Mean of Attitudes and Motivation &amp; Standard Deviation

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
Motivation	4.822	2.678
Motivational Intensity	1.416	1.080
Desire to Learn English	1.921	.927
Attitudes toward English	1.486	1.106
Integrativeness	5.500	2.335
Interest in Foreign Languages	1.607	.979
Attitudes toward English Culture	1.794	.978
Integrative Orientation	2.098	.840
Instrumental Orientation	1.944	.927
AIIC	1.060	.889
Computer & Internet Self-efficacy	1.570	1.108

the different means between Integrative and Instrumental Orientation. Significant difference was found between the two means (2.098 vs. 1.944) at  $p < .05$  level. The participants showed stronger integrative than instrumental orientation.

Table 8 demonstrates the inter-correlations among students' attitudes and motivation. Motivation was found significantly correlated with Integrative and Instrumental Orientation ( $r = .649$  &  $.535$ ;  $p < .01$ ), which indicates that those who have

Table 8

Inter-correlation Matrix: Attitudes and Motivation

	<i>Motivation</i>	<i>Integrativeness</i>	<i>Integrative Orientation</i>	<i>Computer&amp;Internet self-efficacy</i>
Integrativeness	.764			
Integrative Orien	.649			
Instrumental Orien	.535	.610	.601	
AIIC	.506	.466		.469

Correlations are significant at the 0.01 level.

a strong Integrative or Instrumental Orientation are likely to have a high level of motivation to learn English. A stronger positive correlation was found between Integrative and Instrumental Orientation ( $r = .601, p < .01$ ), which means that those who reported a strong integrative orientation are very likely to have an equally strong instrumental orientation.

#### Integrativeness

Integrativeness is measured by three scales in AMTB: Integrative Orientation, Interest in Foreign Languages and Attitudes toward English Culture. The mean score of each scale was computed. Moderate positive means were found for the scale of Attitudes toward English Culture (Mean=1.794) and Interest in Foreign Languages (Mean=1.607); a higher mean was found for Integrative Orientation (Mean=2.098).



The score of Integrativeness was computed by adding up the mean of each three scales. Slightly high positive score (5.500) was found for Integrativeness with a standard deviation of 2.335, which indicates that the majority of the participants (68%) reported their Integrativeness between 3.165 and 7.835.

Motivation and Integrativeness showed a strong correlation ( $r = .764, p < .01$ ). The covariance between the two is .531, which indicates that 53.1% of the variance of Motivation is caused by the change of Integrativeness.

#### Attitudes toward an Internet-based Informal Context

AIIC was reflected in 8 items. The mean score was computed to reflect AIIC. A moderate mean of 1.060 was found among these ESL students with a standard deviation of 0.889, which indicates that the majority of participants (68%) reported AIIC between 0.171 and 1.949. They have positive attitudes toward learning English using the Internet in informal context.

Motivation and AIIC showed a significant moderate correlation ( $r = .506, p < .01$ ). The covariance between the two is .401, which indicates that 40.1% of the variance of Motivation is caused by the change of AIIC. As compared to Integrativeness, AIIC has a relatively small effect on Motivation. AIIC was found significantly correlated with Integrativeness ( $r = .466, p < .01$ ).

### Factors Influencing Attitudes and Motivation

There is no significant age difference in participants' motivation, orientation, integrativeness and AIIC at  $p < .05$  level. Participants' TOEFL score was not found significantly correlated with motivation, integrativeness or AIIC.

*Gender Difference.* One-Way ANOVA was conducted to compare gender difference in attitudinal variables. Male and female showed similar AIIC, motivation, Integrativeness, and integrative and instrumental orientation. Gender difference was found in participants' computer & Internet self-efficacy. Male reported significantly higher self-efficacy than their female counterparts (Mean = 1.750 vs. 1.302;  $p < .05$ ).

*Major Difference.* A total of 93 participants (86.9%) are from the Faculty of Science (43%) and the Faculty of Engineering (43.9%). The rest of the 14 participants (13.1%) are from other 8 different faculties or departments. These 14 participants were not included while analyzing major difference due to the small number under each faculty or department.

Independent Sample T test was performed to compare the means of variables within the two major groups. Statistically significant difference was found in participants' instrumental orientation, hours on the Internet per day, and English learned from the Internet. Engineering students showed higher scores on Instrumental Orientation than science students (Mean = 2.181 vs. 1.717,  $p < .05$ ). Engineering students reported that they spent more hours on the Internet than science students (Mean = 5.553 vs. 3.794,  $p < .05$ ). Engineering students also reported higher level of Computer & Internet self-efficacy

(Mean = 1.851 vs. 1.391;  $p < .05$ ).

*Factors Influencing AIIC.* Computer & Internet self-efficacy and AIIC showed significant moderate correlation ( $r = .469$ ;  $p < .01$ ).

#### Characteristics of the Internet

*Online Communication.* In the open-ended questions, participants reported five categories of characteristics that contributed to their choice of using English in online communication: (a) Eight participants mentioned that they preferred online English communication in general because of its cheap, quick and convenient access. (b) Five participants reported that online communication in English helped avoid face-to-face interaction, which made them less nervous. They had smoother English conversation in online communication in that they did not have to worry about their deficiency of pronunciation and listening. (c) Seven participants talked about the asynchronous character of online communication: they had enough time to organize their ideas, do editing and spell-check, and use computer dictionary. (d) Four participants mentioned that they had to use English while communicating online, because it is the popular and dominant language in online communication here in North American; and some email system does not even support Chinese. They also pointed out that English was also their language to communicate with friends who don't speak Chinese. (e) Fifteen participants brought it up that they preferred English in online communication because it was easier and faster to type English than Chinese.

Participants also talked about the disadvantages of English communication online.

Four of them said that due to the lack of tone, facial and body language, sometimes it was hard to express true ideas and they might have some misrepresentation without noticing it.

*Obtaining and Reading Online Information.* Participants were also required to talk about their experiences in obtaining and reading information online. Three categories of characteristics of the Internet were discovered in their response that might have contributed to the use of English in such online activities: (a) Thirty-four participants reported that they liked obtaining and reading information online in general because of its easy, cheap (sometimes, free) and convenient access. (b) Eighteen participants mentioned English as the dominant working language on the Internet. Among them, fifteen said that more information and richer resource is available in English than Chinese on the Internet, and a lot of useful websites are in English; one participant specified that she often used Wikipedia (an online free Encyclopedia) that is mostly in English. (c) Seven participants said English is the most powerful language to retrieve online academic information since most online journals are in English and they could always find more academic information and sometimes better explanation in English. Three participants mentioned that online English information is more up-to-date. (d) Eight participants reported that it was easier and faster to read English online than on paper because they could use a computer/online dictionary. They said they did not have to look up in the traditional dictionary, only putting the cursor on top of an unknown word and its meaning would appear. (e) Three participants mentioned that they preferred reading English online

because they could easily edit and save the information. One of them actually said: “it is much easier to cut/copy and paste a paragraph than write it down on paper.”

Participants were also required to discuss their concerns about obtaining and reading English information online and things that hold them from doing so. Interestingly, one participant brought up the environmental concern saying that it would save a large amount of paper if people could read online instead of printing them out. One major problem that holds them back is the health issue. Fourteen participants reported that reading long hours at the computer strained their eyes; while printed stuff were clearer and they could read for as long time as they wanted. It worth mentioning that three participants reported that they had never known about any ESL websites and they would like to visit regularly if was informed of some.

## CHAPTER V

### DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to explore second language learning motivation in informal contexts, particularly an Internet-based situation. The results shed some light on the knowledge and understanding of L2 motivation to the current research. In this chapter, I first talk about the conclusions drawn from the findings of this study with consideration to the current literature. Further, I address the implications to L2 teaching, the limitations of this study, and finally, the direction for future research.

#### Chinese Students' ESL Motivation and Orientations

According to the framework of this study, students' motivation was assessed by three constructs: Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, and Attitudes toward Learning English. Though not being required to learn English any more, the students demonstrate an above moderate level of ESL motivation. They show a strong desire to learn the language, expend effort in their learning, and hold favorable attitudes toward English learning.

Integrativeness, which reflects an interest in the target group and an openness to take on characteristics of the target cultural and community, is suggested by this study to be a primary attitudinal foundation that supports and sustains ESL motivation in informal contexts. This result corroborates the findings of Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner's (2001) study of Spanish children in the *Enjoy English* summer language program. They reported that motivation has a strong correlation with integrativeness ( $r = .61, p < .0001$ ). Though

being investigated in different learning situations, the findings in these two studies indicate the primary role integrativeness plays in supporting and sustaining L2 motivation in informal contexts.

Next to integrativeness, instrumentality, which refers to conditions where an individual learns an L2 for practical, economic and utilitarian benefits or advantages, is also found to be an important motivational foundation. These findings demonstrate the consistency of the foundational role integrativeness and instrumentality play in motivation across learning contexts.

Participants in this study are both integratively and instrumentally oriented, but they show a stronger integrative orientation. The results suggest that although gaining practical benefits or advantages is a reason for students to learn English, a dominant reason appears that they want to better understand English-speaking people, their culture and community. However, this result contradicts the finding of Li (2006) who reported that Chinese research students in the UK demonstrated mainly the instrumental orientation in an informal setting. Participants' length of stay in the English-speaking country may account for the different findings in the two studies. The research students in Li's study were all in their first year in UK while the participants in this study have been living in Canada for 2.71 years on average. More interactions with English-speaking people and more favorable experience and involvement of the English culture may contribute to students' willingness to identify with the English community, which may consequently enhance their integrative orientation.

## The Impact of the Internet-based Context on ESL Motivation

According to Gardner (1985, 2001), favorable attitudes toward the learning situation act as a foundation for sustained L2 motivation. A correlation load between them would suggest the amount of impact the attitudes toward the learning situation have on motivation.

Among the varied informal situations, the Internet-based situation tends to be an important one. The students reported that on average, 30% of their recently developed English knowledge and skills were gained from the Internet experience. They displayed positive attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context (AIIC). The moderate correlation ( $r = .506, p < .01$ ) between AIIC and motivation suggests that AIIC serves as an important foundation for ESL motivation. These findings demonstrate that the Internet-based situation helps support ESL motivation in general informal contexts.

This result is consistent with the findings of Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner (2001) who reported that the construct of attitudes toward the learning situation was a foundation for sustained motivation in informal contexts. It is worth noticing that the correlation ( $r = .59, p < .0001$ ) they found between motivation and attitudes toward the learning situation is a bit higher as compared to the one of this study ( $r = .506, p < .01$ ). The difference might be due to the nature of the two learning situations: Masgoret, Bernaus and Gardner's study was set up in the *Enjoy English* summer language program where Spanish children learned English. This situation may be the primary context, if not the only one, in which students were involved in language learning. Yet the Internet-based



context in this study is only one of the informal situations in which language learning takes place. Therefore, the variance of motivation is only partially caused by the change of AIIC. Participants' attitudes toward other informal learning contexts also account for the variance of motivation.

This study suggests Gardner's (1985, 2001) conceptualized socio-educational model in an informal context. Students' attitudinal constructs, namely, integrativeness and attitudes toward the learning situation, account for a significant and meaningful proportion of the difference in motivation and they act as attitudinal foundations for sustained ESL motivation. Instrumentality also appears to be a factor that supports motivation.

#### Characteristics of the Internet-based Context

Some important characteristics of the Internet are found to have an impact on ESL learners' AIIC. First, text-based online communication helps alleviate communication apprehension. Research reveals that requiring L2 speakers to communicate with the target language people can evoke apprehension (McCroskey, Fayer & Richmond, 1985). The participants in this study age from 20-40. The time they were learning English back in China, their English classes were grammar-based, focusing on memorizing text and vocabulary. They were not given enough opportunity to learn and practice English through communication. While living in Canada, they appear to be apprehensive about oral communication. This anxiety, according to McCroskey, Fayer and Richmond, is very likely to make them avoid oral communication. They may prefer text-based online

communication, because it facilitates their communication while reducing their apprehension. They feel less apprehensive in online communication since they can make full use of their advantage of reading and writing skills. It becomes easier for them to understand written messages and have smooth and explicit communication.

This finding is similar to the study of Freiermuth (2001) who found that, as compared to face-to-face interaction, L2 learners felt more comfortable in their online text-based communication, and felt less worried about their language proficiencies that may hold them back from oral interactions.

Online communication creates a safe space for the rehearsal and maintenance of the target language, in which students feel less stressful and more confident to communicate. As a result, they produce more language discourse and develop their competence level in both online and subsequent oral communications.

According to Horwitz, Horwitz and Cope (1986), language anxiety includes three components, namely, communication apprehension, test anxiety and fear of evaluation. The results of this study do not indicate the Internet-based context helps alleviate the other two components of language anxiety. This could be due to the features of informal context in which no test or evaluation is involved.

Second, online communication could be better controlled in terms of the time to respond and the frequency of responses. Online communication leaves students more time to figure out expressions they do not understand (they can either check the dictionary right away or later, then get to know them), and enough time to organize their idea, revise

and edit the message before sending it off. This finding is consistent to Kivela (1996) and Kroonenberg (1994) who found that net-based discussions slowed down communication, which allowed students to pause or pay closer attention where needed and provided opportunities for reflection during the communication. This is identified in Skinner and Austin's (1999) study as being "asynchronous" interaction, which means message could be added after. Their findings about L2 motivation in computer conferencing also suggest that asynchronous interaction is a factor that contributes to learner's favorable attitudes toward computer conferencing.

Third, it is easier and faster to type English than Chinese. This finding may be unique to ESL learners with Chinese as their first language. There is no way to type Chinese characters directly as the keyboard is designed according to Roman letters. Chinese characters are associated with the Roman letters by Pinyin, which uses Roman alphabet to represent sounds in Standard Mandarin (Wikipedia). Each Chinese character can be spelled by a group of letters according to its pronunciation. With one of the most popular Chinese typing, people have to enter Pinyin first according to the standard mandarin pronunciation, and then transfer it to the equivalent Chinese character. One Pinyin may result in many different characters, since Chinese have four tones for one single pronunciation. Also, people who do not speak perfect standard mandarin may have difficulties spelling correct Pinyin. These reasons make the typing quite complicated and time-consuming.

Fast typing has rarely been identified as a factor that contributes to learners'

adoption of online L2 (rather than their first language) communication. It may be due to two reasons (a) most studies on online communication take place in classroom and students do not have a choice of language use, as they are required to use L2 to conduct online communication; (b) many languages are as easy typing as English. Therefore, though fast English typing appears to be a reason for Chinese students to conduct online communication, we should be prudent to generalize it to other L2 learners with different first languages.

Fourth, spell/grammar-check is also recognized as an important reason to choose online communication. Programs like Microsoft Word can do automatic spell/grammar check. The checking before sending off an important message not only helps students achieve effective communication, but also “teaches” them some spelling or grammar knowledge.

Fifth, the use of online or computer dictionary contributes to learners’ choice of both communication and obtaining/reading online information. Online/computer dictionary is convenient for any reading and writing on computer. Students do not have to leave the screen to look up in the traditional dictionary. It takes much less time using online/computer dictionary, since one only needs to put the cursor on top of the word or, enter or copy and paste the word to get its meaning.

A couple of disadvantages of using the Internet in L2 learning are demonstrated in this study. First, in online communication, sometimes it is hard to express the true ideas without using tone, facial or body language and learners may have misrepresentations

without noticing them. The other disadvantage is that working long hours at the computer strains the eyes. This health related issue is not specified in the L2 context, but rather in terms of the Internet as a general learning medium,

#### Factors Influencing Attitudes & Motivation toward ESL Learning

None of the factors investigated in this study, such as age, gender and educational level are found to have an impact on students' attitudes and motivation in general informal contexts. One reason may account for this phenomenon: the Chinese students surveyed in this study have relatively high level of English proficiency. When they were taking English class before, most of them would belong to the "most motivated students" category. Such students may display similar attitudes and motivation toward English learning in both formal and informal settings.

Computer & Internet self-efficacy refers to computer and Internet users' self-perceived confidence, competence and expectations of using these technologies (Wu & Tsai, 2006). In this study, it is identified as a factor that influences students' AIIC. Some studies claimed that computer & Internet self-efficacy have an impact on individual's attitudes toward the computer/Internet-related activities (Levine & Donitsa-Schmidt, 1997, 1998; Wu & Tsai, 2006). It seems reasonable and highly likely that individuals who have strong computer & Internet self-efficacy would show more favorable attitudes toward their language learning in the Internet-based context. This finding in L2 learning context provides supplementary evidence to computer & Internet self-efficacy research.

Although gender and major difference in computer & Internet self-efficacy have

been found in this study, they do not result in different AIIC either between male and female, or between science and engineering students. It might be because the gender and major difference in computer & Internet self-efficacy is not big enough to produce any consequent difference in AIIC.

Major difference has been found to have an impact on students' instrumentality. Instrumentality refers to learning the L2 for the economic and practical benefits or advantages, such as obtaining a job (Gardener, 1985). Engineering students display a higher level of instrumentality than science students. It might be because most engineering students are expected to enter the work force right after graduation due to the need of the work market. For science students, there is less work opportunities, so some of them choose to delay their entrance to the work force by doing a Master, PhD, or Post Doc; on the other hand, the nature of their work decides that language proficiency means more to engineering students, as they need to constantly communicate with clients, and do team work for a project. The work of science students, however, does not involve as much human interaction. It may be, therefore, reasonable that engineering students tend to be more instrumentally oriented.

L2 proficiency has demonstrated either a positive or negative correlation with motivation (Coleman, 1995; Shaaban & Ghaith, 2000; Sung & Padilla, 1998). This study, however, reveals that English proficiency does not correlate with motivation. This may not be surprising given that the TOEFL score of the participants in this study is more than three years old, which does not truly represent their current English proficiency. Another

possible reason might be that most of the students have relatively high English proficiency and individual with similar proficiency may demonstrate similar attitudes and motivation.

### Implications for L2 Teaching

This study is set up in an informal context, but its findings have instructional significance as well. The Internet is increasingly implemented to educational instructions and has been found to have a great and dramatic effect (Peng, Tsai & Wu, 2006). The most important goal of implementing an Internet-based context is to apply the medium to promote and facilitate learning. But this goal cannot be achieved if students are not willing to be involved in or do not actively participate (Lee, Cheunng & Chen, 2005). The findings of this study provide important information about the characteristics of the Internet that would appeal to L2 learners, which would facilitate educators' endeavor to computerize their pedagogical practice and to integrate the Internet into their instruction. The following implications are drawn from the results of the study.

First, online text communication could serve as a complementary form of oral interaction, which will favor the highly apprehensive students or those who are relative passive in a traditional class environment. Students will feel less apprehensive in communication and have more language production in the online context. This will not only contribute directly to their language learning, but also help support and sustain their motivation, which will enhance the learning in the long run.

Second, adequate computer & Internet self-efficacy promotes favorable attitudes

toward the Internet-based L2 learning situation, which in turn increases motivation. The Internet-assisted language learning could be more successful if learners' computer & Internet self-efficacy are enhanced. L2 educators could provide workshops focusing on language learning related technologies and orientations of the Internet-based learning in order to facilitate L2 learning both inside and outside classroom.

Third, L2 learning is a life long process, and does not end with language instruction. L2 educators and instructors could better prepare learners for further informal learning by moving them toward autonomy, orienting them to the potential learning medium and informing them of helpful resources, such as some L2 learning websites.

#### Limitations

A few limitations in this study should be taken into consideration. First, it is a convenient sample and its participants have relatively high English proficiency. For this reason, the findings of this study may not be generalized to the entire L2 population.

Second, university Chinese students spend long hours on the Internet and are socialized to communicate and obtain information online. According to the *Statistical Survey Report on Internet Development in China* released by China Internet Network Information Center (CNNIC, 2007), by the end of 2006, the Internet user in China reached 137 million, with 54.9% of them being 18 to 30 years old. Almost half of the Internet users (47.4%) claimed that their primary approach to obtain information is the Internet. Some of their most frequently used Internet services have been Email, news, search engines, obtaining information, forum, BBS, discussing groups and online chat.



Therefore, Chinese students' attitudes toward the Internet-based informal context may be different from those of students from other cultures. This finding may not necessarily reflect the attitudes of L2 learners in general.

#### Directions for Future Research

This study is one of the few attempts to investigate L2 motivation in an informal context and to understand the impact an Internet-based situation has on motivation. Taking into account the findings of this study as well as the literature in L2 research, the following suggestions are proposed for further research.

First, though being important, the Internet-based context is only one of the informal L2 contexts. There is a need to explore varied other contexts in order to fully understand L2 learning motivation in informal contexts.

Second, the researcher was not able to collect enough data in terms of the characteristics of the Internet-based language learning context, due to the primarily quantitative nature of this study and the need to keep the questionnaire at an appropriate length. No characteristics were associated and specified to any particular online activity, such as E-mail, instant message or online text chat. Further attention is needed to explore the specific characteristics of these online activities by utilizing a qualitative approach.

Third, partially due to the reasons discussed above, this study only identified two disadvantages of the use of the Internet in L2 learning. Though being regarded as an important learning medium, the Internet has only been employed as an educational technology for a decade or so. As a pretty new medium, it takes time for researchers and

educators to accumulate evidence of its disadvantages in each educational setting and discipline. There is a need for L2 researchers to delve into this relatively new topic and explore its potential disadvantages in order to make better use of the Internet in language learning.

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## APPENDICES

### APPENDIX A

#### Questionnaire

##### Motivation to Learn a Second Language Using the Internet

Please note: learning and practicing English using the Internet includes visiting ESL websites, obtaining and reading online English information and communicating online using English via E-mail, instant messaging and online text chat.

**Please answer the following questions:**

1. I'm ☐female ☐ male.
2. I'm \_\_\_\_ years old. I've been in Canada for \_\_\_\_ years.
2. I've been learning English for \_\_\_\_ years.
4. I'm an ☐ undergrad/ ☐grad student. My major is \_\_\_\_.
5. I took ☐ TOEFL/ ☐ IELTS \_\_\_\_ (1,2,3...) years ago. My score is \_\_\_\_.
6. I'm ☐ taking ☐ not taking ESL class.
7. I ☐ have/ ☐ have no access to the Internet at home.
8. I usually spend \_\_\_\_ hours on the Internet every day.
9. I go to ESL learning website ☐never ☐yearly ☐monthly ☐weekly ☐daily.
10. ☐ 10% ☐20% ☐40% ☐60% ☐80% ☐100% of my newly developed English knowledge and skills are gained from the Internet experience.

**For the following statements, please circle a response that best represents your opinion.**

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1. I would like to know more about English culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2. If it were up to me, I would spend a lot of time learning and practicing English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3. I really enjoy learning English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4. Studying English is important for me because it will allow me to communicate with English speaking people.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5. I make an effort to understand all the English I see and hear.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6. I plan to learn as much English as possible.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8. I wish I could speak additional languages perfectly.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9. Studying English is important because it will help me compete with others.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10. I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
11. I wish I were fluent in English.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
12. The more I get to know about English culture, the more I want to be fluent in the language.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
13. I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14. Studying English is important because it will enable me to better understand English-speaking people's life & culture.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Learning and practicing English using the Internet is		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Neutral	Slightly Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
15.	enjoyable	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
16.	interesting	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
17.	rewarding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18.	simple	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
19.	colourful	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
20.	important	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
21.	necessary	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
22.	good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
23. I have a lot of self-confidence when it comes to working with computer and the Internet.		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**For the following two statements, please circle a response that best represents your opinion, and explain why you choose that response.**

24. I like using English to communicate with others by E-mail, instant message and online text chat.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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For item 24, please explain why you choose that response:

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25. I like using English to obtain and read information online. ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐ ☐

For item 25, please explain why you choose that response:

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**Open-ended question**

Is there anything you would like to say about learning English using the Internet? (You may want to discuss your personal experience or concerns)

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**Thank you!**

## APPENDIX B

### Consent Form



### CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

**Title of Study:** Attitudes and Motivation toward Learning a Second Language in an Internet-based Informal Context: Perceptions of University ESL Students

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Yi Zhou, a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The result of this study will be contributed to the thesis requirements of a Master of Education degree.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Yi Zhou at 905-902-8232 or [zhou1g@uwindsor.ca](mailto:zhou1g@uwindsor.ca).

#### PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

This study aims to explore university ESL students' (from Chinese descent) attitudes and motivation to learn English in informal learning contexts and investigate how the use of Internet affects their attitudes and motivation.

#### PROCEDURES

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Read and sign the letter of consent to participate.

Complete a questionnaire pertaining to second language learning motivation.

The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

#### POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS

There are no potential risks for this study.

#### POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

This study will further our understanding of second language motivation:

It will help to (1) investigate the effect of Internet on second language learning motivation



in informal learning contexts, (2) understand the specific characteristics of the internet that promote second language learning motivation, (3) direct second language teachers and curriculum designers to incorporate these factors into their classroom instructions, activities as well as the teaching syllabus in order to promote students learning performance.

Participants will benefit from understanding the motivational factors inherent in the use of Internet, which will assist their ESL acquisition in informal learning contexts.

### **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There is no direct financial compensation to the participants.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Your name will not appear on the written data of the study, or in the reports of the study. Code numbers will appear on the study questionnaires. All the data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a secure location and will only be accessible to the researchers. Once the questionnaire data have been entered and analyzed, the questionnaires will be destroyed by the researcher.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to participate in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

### **FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS**

The results of the study will be posted on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 on the University REB Study Results web page as below:

<http://web4.uwindsor.ca/units/researchEthicsBoard/studyresultforms.nsf/VisitorView?OpenForm>

### **SUBSEQUENT USE OF DATA**

This data will be used in subsequent studies.

This data will be used in subsequent studies by the research team.

Do you give consent for the subsequent use of the data from this study?

☐ Yes      ☐ No

### **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

You may withdraw your consent at any time and discontinue participation without penalty. If you have questions regarding your rights as a research subject, contact: Research

Ethics Coordinator, University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario, N9B 3P4; telephone: 519-253-3000, ext. 3916; e-mail: lbunn@uwindsor.ca.

**SIGNATURE OF RESEARCH SUBJECT/LEGAL REPRESENTATIVE**

I understand the information provided for the study: Motivation to Learn a Second Language Using the Internet: Perceptions of University ESL Learners. My questions have been answered to my satisfaction, and I agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this form.

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Name of Subject

---

Signature of Subject

---

Date

**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

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Signature of Investigator

---

Date

## APPENDIX C

### Letter of Information



### **LETTER OF INFORMATION FOR CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH**

**Title of Study:** Attitudes and Motivation toward Learning a Second Language in an Internet-based Informal Context: Perceptions of University ESL Students

You are asked to participate in a research study conducted by Yi Zhou, a graduate student from the Faculty of Education at the University of Windsor. The result of this study will be contributed to the thesis requirements of a Master of Education degree.

If you have any questions or concerns about the research, please feel free to contact Yi Zhou at 905-902-8232 or [zhou1g@uwindsor.ca](mailto:zhou1g@uwindsor.ca).

#### **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**

This study aims to explore university ESL students' (from Chinese descent) attitudes and motivation to learn English in informal learning contexts and investigate how the use of Internet affects their attitudes and motivation.

#### **PROCEDURES**

If you volunteer to participate in this study, we would ask you to do the following things:

Read and sign the letter of consent to participate.

Complete a questionnaire pertaining to second language learning motivation.

The questionnaire will take approximately 20 minutes to complete.

#### **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no potential risks for this study.

#### **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**

This study will further our understanding of second language motivation:

It will help to (1) investigate the effect of Internet on second language learning motivation in informal learning contexts, (2) understand the specific characteristics of the internet that promote second language learning motivation, (3) direct second language teachers and curriculum designers to incorporate these factors into their classroom instructions, activities as well as the teaching syllabus in order to promote students learning performance.

Participants will benefit from understanding the motivational factors inherent in the use of Internet, which will assist their ESL acquisition in informal learning contexts.

### **PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION**

There is no direct financial compensation to the participants.

### **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission.

Your name will not appear on the written data of the study, or in the reports of the study. Code numbers will appear on the study questionnaires. All the data will be kept in a locked cabinet in a secure location and will only be accessible to the researchers. Once the questionnaire data have been entered and analyzed, the questionnaires will be destroyed by the researcher.

### **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

You can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

### **FEEDBACK OF THE RESULTS OF THIS STUDY TO THE SUBJECTS**

The results of the study will be posted on July 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 on the University REB Study Results web page as below:

<http://web4.uwindsor.ca/units/researchEthicsBoard/studyresultforms.nsf/VisitorView?OpenForm>

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**SIGNATURE OF INVESTIGATOR**

These are the terms under which I will conduct research.

---

Signature of Investigator

---

Date

## VITA AUCTORIS

Yi Zhou was born and raised in Harbin, China. She showed great enthusiasm in learning English ever since she started schooling. She received a B.A. in English from Heilongjiang University in 2001. From there she went on to obtain an M.A. in Linguistics from the same University in 2004. When she was doing her Masters study, she also taught College English courses at College of Adult Education at the University. After she completed her M.A. she came to Canada and, a year later, enrolled in the M.Ed. program in Curriculum Studies at the University of Windsor. Her knowledge and experience of teaching and learning English, together with her passion for second language research, helped her complete this thesis.